

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY ARA/LA.RDRISCOLL

APPROVED BY ARA:WHLUERS

S/S: LREDDY

H:LPEZZULLO

ARA/PPC:MRBARNEBEY

P:PCHABIB

S - HDCOLLUMS

L:FWILLIS

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 234417 TOSEC 270490

EXDIS FOR THE SECRETARY THROUGH HABIB FROM ARA-LUERS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI -PFOR - SHUM - PINS

SUBJECT: ACTION MEMORANDUM: DEATH OF ORLANDO LETELIER

(S/S 7619826)

1. THE PROBLEM: U.S. GOVERNMENT MEASURES FOLLOWING
BOMBING DEATH OF ORLANDO LETELIER.

2. EX-FOREIGN MINISTER AND AMBASSADOR TO U.S. ORLANDO
LETELIER DEL SOLAR WAS KILLED BY A CAR BOMB THE MORNING OF
SEPTEMBER 21 IN WASHINGTON. TWO AMERICANS, MR. AND
MRS. MICHAEL MOFFITT OF POTOMAC, MARYLAND, WERE IN THE CAR
WHEN THE BOMB EXPLODED. MRS. MOFFITT IS DEAD; MR. MOFFITT
WILL PROBABLY SURVIVE.

3. LETELIER WAS DRIVING THE MOFFITTS TO WORK AT THE TRANS
NATIONAL INSTITUTE, 1901 Q STREET, WHERE ALL THREE WERE
EMPLOYED, IN HIS AUTOMOBILE. IN THE 2300 BLOCK OF
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MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE BETWEEN THE RUMANIAN AND IRISH EMBASS-

IES, A BOMB EXPLODED UNDER THE DRIVER'S SEAT, ACCORDING TO A WITNESS, AT APPROXIMATELY 9:38 A.M. LETELIER WAS PRONOUNCED DEAD ON ARRIVAL AT GEORGE WASHINGTON HOSPITAL. THERE WERE NO OTHER INJURIES OR DAMAGE.

4. SO FAR METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT IS HANDLING THE INVESTIGATION. HOWEVER, L HAS TOLD FBI THAT BECAUSE LETELIER WAS ONCE AN AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S. AND BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBILITY THAT THIS WAS A TERRORIST ACT, THE BUREAU SHOULD ENTER THE CASE. WHILE JUSTICE HAS NOT YET APPROVED WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT THE FBI WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE INVESTIGATION.

5. MEANWHILE, THE DEPARTMENT'S SPOKESMAN (BROWN) MADE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT AT THE SEPTEMBER 21 BRIEFING:

QUOTE: THE DEPARTMENT HAS LEARNED OF THE DEATH THIS MORNING IN WASHINGTON, D.C. OF DR. ORLANDO LETELIER, THE FORMER CHILEAN AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S. AN EXPLOSION OCCURRED IN AN AUTOMOBILE WHICH DR. LETELIER WAS DRIVING IN THE 2300 BLOCK OF MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE AT APPROXIMATELY 9:30 A.M. TODAY. DR. LETELIER WAS PRONOUNCED DEAD ON ARRIVAL AT GEORGE WASHINGTON HOSPITAL. ONE OTHER PASSENGER WAS KILLED, AND ANOTHER WAS SERIOUSLY INJURED. THE WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN POLICE ARE PURSUING AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THIS TRAGIC OCCURRENCE.

DR. LETELIER SERVED AS AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S. FROM 1971 TO 1973. HE PREVIOUSLY HAD BEEN A SENIOR OFFICIAL OF THE INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK RESIDENT IN WASHINGTON. FOLLOWING HIS AMBASSADORIAL ASSIGNMENT HE RETURNED TO CHILE AND SERVED AS MINISTER OF FOREIGN RELATIONS AND LATER AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE IN THE GOVERNMENT OF FORMER CHILEAN PRESIDENT SALVADOR ALLENDE GOSSENS. DR. LETELIER RESIDED IN THE WASHINGTON AREA AND WAS PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF THE TRANS-NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF 1901 Q STREET.

THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE EXPRESSES ITS GRAVE CONCERN
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ABOUT DR. LETELIER'S TRAGIC DEATH AND EXTENDS ITS DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO HIS WIFE AND FAMILY. END QUOTE.

6. NSC STAFF IS ALSO CONSIDERING POSSIBILITY OF A STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT FORD CONCERNING LETELIER'S DEATH.

7. AMBASSADOR TRUCCO CAME IN TO SEE ME THIS AFTERNOON. HE EXPRESSED HIS GOVERNMENT'S SHOCK, ASKED FOR A FULL IN-

VESTIGATION, AND HOPED THE USG COULD COOL UNFOUNDED AND .
EMOTIONAL ALLEGATIONS AGAINST HIS GOVERNMENT.

8. LETELIER'S DEATH, APPARENTLY AT THE HANDS OF
TERRORISTS, WILL LEAD TO SPECULATION THAT DINA (CHILE'S
SECRET POLICE) WAS RESPONSIBLE. HOWEVER, ONE COULD ALSO
SPECULATE THAT SOME EXILE GROUP, SUCH AS THE MIR, WANTED
TO CREATE A MARTYR. AT THIS POINT IT IS ANYBODY'S GUESS.
BUT WE SHALL BE UNDER GREAT PRESSURE FROM THE HILL AND
OTHER QUARTERS TO DO SOMETHING. (SENATORS KENNEDY AND
ABOUREZK HAVE ALREADY PUBLICLY BLAMED THE CHILEAN RIGHT
FOR THE DEATH. WE HAVE ALSO HEARD OF SEVERAL RESOLUTIONS
CONDEMNING THIS ACT BEING DRAFTED ON THE HILL.) WE BELIEVE
YOU SHOULD SEND A LETTER TO MRS. LETELIER AS EVIDENCE OF
YOUR PERSONAL CONCERN OVER THIS TRAGIC OCCURRENCE.

9. RECOMMENDATION: THAT YOU SEND THE FOLLOWING LETTER OF
CONDOLENCE TO MRS. LETELIER: I WANT TO EXTEND MY DEEPEST
SYMPATHIES TO YOU AND YOUR FAMILY. DR. LETELIER WAS WELL
KNOWN TO US AS AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHILE AND
THROUGH HIS LONG-TIME RESIDENCE IN WASHINGTON.

I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO EXPRESS OUR HORROR AND DISMAY
AT THIS CRIMINAL ACT ON THE STREETS OF WASHINGTON. YOU
MAY BE ASSURED THAT WE WILL DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO
APPREHEND THOSE GUILTY AND BRING THEM TO JUSTICE.

APPROVE DISAPPROVE

10. A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF LETELIER FOLLOWS:

ORLANDO LETELIER DEL SOLAR WAS BORN IN TEMUCO,
CHILE ON APRIL 13, 1932. HE ATTENDED THE CHILEAN MILITARY
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ACADEMY AND RECEIVED A LAW DEGREE FROM THE CATHOLIC
UNIVERSITY OF CHILE. ALTHOUGH NOT ACTIVE IN DOMESTIC
POLITICS HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY SINCE 1957
AND SUPPORTED SALVADOR ALLENDE'S FOUR PRESIDENTIAL
CANDIDACIES.

IN 1960 HE BEGAN WORKING IN WASHINGTON AT THE INTER-
AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK WHERE HE SERVED AS RIGHT-HAND
MAN TO BANK PRESIDENT FELIPE HERRERA. HE REMAINED IN
THE BANK UNTIL MARCH 1971 WHEN HE PRESENTED HIS CREDENTIALS
AS CHILEAN AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S. HE SERVED IN THIS
CAPACITY UNTIL MAY 1973 WHEN HE RETURNED TO SANTIAGO TO
ASSUME THE POST OF MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. HE WAS
MARRIED TO ISABEL MARGARITA MERELL GUMUCIO AND HAD FOUR
SONS, CRISTIAN, JOSE IGNACIO, FRANCISCO JAVIER, AND JUAN

PABLO.

HE WAS APPOINTED MINISTER OF DEFENSE ON AUGUST 31, 1973. ON THE DAY OF THE COUP, SEPTEMBER 11, HE WAS ARRESTED AND SENT TO A PRISON CAMP ON DAWSON ISLAND IN SOUTHERN CHILE. HE REMAINED THERE UNTIL MAY 1974 WHEN HE AND OTHER VIP PRISONERS WERE TRANSFERRED TO THE RITOGUE DETENTION CENTER IN SANTIAGO. DURING THIS PERIOD HIS WIFE WAS PLACED UNDER HOUSE ARREST IN SANTIAGO AND HIS CHILDREN WERE ALLOWED TO ATTEND SCHOOL NORMALLY.

ON SEPTEMBER 9, 1974 HE WAS EXPELLED FROM CHILE AND TRAVELED TO VENEZUELA. HIS WIFE AND FAMILY JOINED HIM THERE SHORTLY THEREAFTER. IN JANUARY 1976 HE AND HIS FAMILY CAME TO WASHINGTON WHERE HE HAD ACCEPTED A TEMPORARY POSITION TEACHING POLITICAL SCIENCE AT AMERICAN UNIVERSITY AND FELLOWSHIP AT THE INSTITUTE FOR POLICY STUDIES (IPS). IN THE SUMMER OF 1976 HE WAS APPOINTED PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF THE TRANSNATIONAL INSTITUTE, AN OFF-SHOOT OF IPS. THE JUNTA REVOKED LETELIER'S CITIZENSHIP ON SEPTEMBER 10, 1976.

11. SINCE DRAFTING PARAGRAPH 4 (ABOVE) I SPOKE DIRECTLY TO ATTORNEY GENERAL LEVI EXPLAINING IMPORTANCE OF LETELIER CASE FROM A FOREIGN AFFAIRS STANDPOINT AND REQUESTING THOROUGH FBI INVESTIGATION. ATTORNEY GENERAL INDICATED FBI WOULD LIKELY BECOME INVOLVED IF THE CASE
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IS ASCERTAINED TO FALL WITHIN ITS JURISDICTION.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TOSEC, BOMBING, REPORTS, BRIEFING MATERIALS, DEATHS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 SEP 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE234417
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: LA.RDRISCOLL
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760357-0004
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760932/aaaabaya.tel
Line Count: 204
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 JUL 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <25 OCT 2004 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ACTION MEMORANDUM: DEATH OF ORLANDO LETELIER (S/S 7619826)
TAGS: PFOR, SHUM, PINS, CI, (KISSINGER, HENRY A), (LETELIER, ORLANDO)
To: SECRETARY
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006